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LETTER DATED 5 OCTOBER 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement by the Government of the Russian Federation dated 4 October 1998 on the issue of Kosovo, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and of its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) S. LAVROV

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Annex

STATEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
DATED 4 OCTOBER 1998

The air strikes which the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is planning to carry out against objectives located in the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the pretext of "giving fresh impetus" to the settlement of the Kosovo problem arouse deep disquiet in Moscow.

The Russian Government feels compelled in this connection to emphasize yet again that use of force against a sovereign State without the due and proper approval of the Security Council would constitute a serious violation of the Charter of the United Nations, and would compromise the entire system of international relations as it now stands.

The Russian Government is deeply convinced that extremely complex ethnic conflicts – as is evidently the nature of the conflict in Kosovo – cannot be resolved through military means. Painstaking work is necessary to establish a legal mechanism to ensure that people of different nationalities and religious persuasions can live together in freedom and full security.

There is undeniably a problem in Kosovo. Responsibility lies with the authorities in Belgrade, who have not taken in good time the necessary measures for a political settlement of the situation in the region, but also with the leaders of the Kosovo Albanians, who have not renounced their separatist aims and have refused to enter into constructive dialogue.

Military intervention in the internal Yugoslav conflict would not only fail to tackle the causes of the problem, it would, in fact, merely serve to considerably strengthen resistance in Kosovo and counter the diplomatic efforts currently being made by the international community to initiate dialogue between Serbs and Albanians.

The security of the peacekeeping forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina would be compromised, as would the outcome of the peace process in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and the prospects for stability in the Balkans in general.

The Government of the Russian Federation invites Belgrade to strictly apply the Moscow accords of 16 June 1998, which opened the way to a peaceful settlement of the Kosovo problem. The authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the leaders of the Albanian community in Kosovo must fully respect the provisions of Security Council resolution 1199 (1998) of 23 September 1998, immediately end acts of hostility, urgently take steps to prevent the impending humanitarian catastrophe and begin negotiations with a view to a peaceful settlement of the Kosovo crisis.

This is the only way to restore peace in Kosovo.